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AUTHOR Ingram, Cregg F.; Gale, Darwin F.
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ABSTRACT

A teacher education program designed for preservice students who will work with mildly handicapped students in a regular classroom is described. The program consists of four levels of special education to be completed during the students' last two years of college. The principle training takes place in an elementary school setting. At the first level, students are primarily observers in the class and learn to classify characteristics for different categorical areas of special education. At the next three levels, students are tested for progressive skills in the following competencies: (1) planning curriculum and instruction for exceptional children; (2) administrating and interpreting formal diagnostic measures; (3) implementing and evaluating a behavior management program; and (4) relating effectively with parents and children. The objectives, instructional activities, and evaluation terms for each level are discussed. (JD)

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PRESERVICE FIELD-BASED TEACHER TRAINING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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by

Dr. Cregg F. Ingram
and
Dr. Darwin F. Gale
Brigham Young University

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PRESERVICE TEACHER-TRAINING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Teacher-training programs at the University have been historically carried out on campus. The University screens potential public education teachers and then trains them in a campus setting, with most of the instruction coming through a lecture/discussion method. Teacher Trainees are required to take a prescribed number of course hours covering different areas related to preparing them to teach in the public school system. Trainee's take a variety of instructional methods and content courses that will prepare them to teach a particular subject area or as in the case of elementary school teachers, prepare them to teach a variety of content areas to young children. The college student spends in actual training approximately two years at the University attending either lecture/discussion classes or in college-controlled labs designed to teach specific instructional skills. The final culminating activity is the Student Teacher experience that allows the trainee to apply all that has been learned over the two years in an actual, practical setting involving real children, under real teaching conditions, in a real school. There are many variations to this preservice teacher training program, but characteristically it has a great deal of on-campus instructional time with a small increment of time being spent off campus in actually teaching children in a public school setting.

Teachers and especially beginning teachers have historically complained about their lack of preparation to teach. It is not uncommon to hear the frustrations of beginning teachers expressed in the faculty lounge after they have become familiar and comfortable within the surroundings of their newly acquired position. The frustrations are usually stated in terms of their dissatisfaction with how they have been trained. A frequent frustration is "I didn't know it was going to be like this," or "I wasn't prepared for what I am now doing," which on the surface appears to be a direct negative reflection of the teacher-training program from which these newly trained teachers had participated. The statement "on the surface" should be explained in that more often than not the newly trained teacher had been exposed to a majority of the essential important information necessary to perform adequately within that public school setting. Unfortunately it appears the new teacher, somewhere during the time of the training segment, did not realize or could not project the value it would have in actual teaching situations. Therefore, even though exposed to the essential necessary parts of the teaching process, the value and importance of those parts were not readily available and therefore were lost somewhere within the student's shuffle of getting a degree at the university.

At Brigham Young University the existance of this type of teacher-training model exists much as it does in other teacher-training institutions across the country. There is a great deal of on-campus preparation time in which the essential elements of

the teaching process are provided and "taught" to the students. The students upon graduation and acceptance into jobs as teachers in the public school system, however, express the same kinds of complaints that are expressed by newly certified teachers throughout the country. That is "I was not prepared for many of the things I am now confronting as a teacher." The majority of the teacher-trainees at Brigham Young University in both regular and special education are assimulated into the public school teaching setting. The present teacher-trainee model coupled with the knowledge that most of the teacher-trainees eventually end up in the public school system provides an impetus for considering a more responsive teacher-trainee program that provides for a more realistic teaching-training experiences to the trainee.

Purposes

The purpose of the teacher-training program in Special Education at Brigham Young University is to provide increased opportunities for realistic teaching preparation. These will be conducted at sites under conditions that parallel the requirements for the teaching position that a majority of teacher-trainees graduating from BYU will fulfill in the public school system.

Essentially a majority of the instruction in this program will be field-based instead of campus-based. Field-based in that the students will be placed within a public school setting and given varying degrees of teacher-training responsibilities. The program evaluation will be competency-based; that is, the teacher-trainees will have to demonstrate a competence for teaching

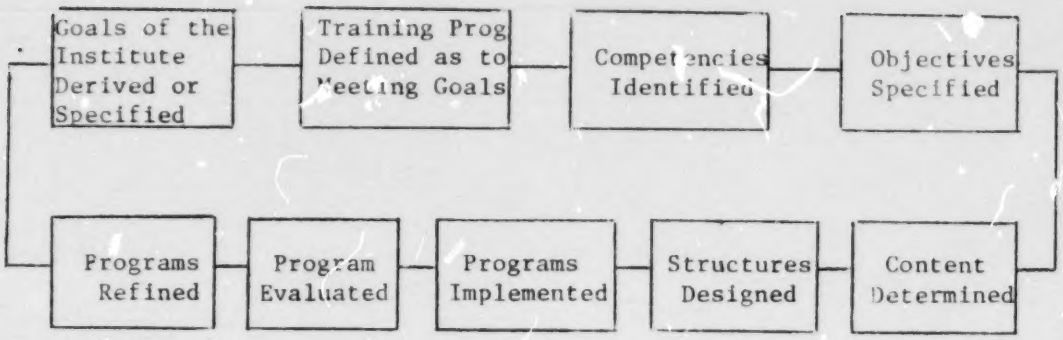
through applying or manifesting skills and behaviors related to good public school teaching. Further, an attempt will be made to analyze 1) the effectiveness of a field-based teacher-training program in better preparing teachers to work within the public school setting; 2) the behaviors necessary to teach within the public school system and 3) the strategies used to train teachers to teach will be a primary focus of this teacher-training program.

There needs to be within any teacher-training program a solid foundation from which that program evolves. A foundation that illustrates clearly the importance of what is being taught, how it's being taught and what its application is in the teaching process. The time has long since passed when "attitudes" and "opinions" are the primary motivating forces behind the identification of important instructional content. Opinion should be replaced with well-founded data-based information.

Program Development

In developing the field-based teaming program a systematic development model was employed (Blackhurst, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky). The model (outlined below) provided a systematic means from which the competencies to be taught to the teacher trainees could be identified as well as the methods for training and evaluating students were derived.

Program Development Model



From the competency identification (in which over a thousand critical incidents were collected from literally hundreds of special educators, teachers, parents of exceptional children and administrators of special education programs) five areas of training needs were specified. These five areas have become the nucleus of the field-based teacher-training program. The five areas of competence are:

1. Assessment
2. Interpersonal
3. Administrative
4. Curricular
5. Behavior

Program Description

The program consists of having students complete four levels of training in Special Education. These levels are completed during the students last two years of college and are designed to 1) allow the trainee to determine if teaching is the profession he/she wishes to pursue as a lifetime goal; 2) train teachers to work with mildly handicapped children who represent a multiplicity of handi-

caps (i.e. educable mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, orthopedically handicapped, etc.) but who are in the mainstream of the public school system; and 3) work cooperatively with regular classroom teachers in developing the most appropriate educational programs for handicapped children as required in public law 94-142 (Education for all Handicapped Children Act). The focus for each level is outlined as follows:

Level I

Course Enrollment. The students at Level I will enroll for six hours of Elementary Education course work. These six hours will be under the primary direction of the Elementary Education faculty but with emphasis in Special Education. These six hours are the prerequisite courses to the student's teacher training in Special Education. Other prerequisite courses that students must have taken prior to entering at this level are: Introduction to Special Education course, and Observation of Special Education classes in the public schools.

Objectives. Of primary concern to the Special Education faculty will be the course content for these six hours of Elementary Education. The course content should be developed around meeting the following objectives. Students at the conclusion should be able to:

1. Identify and discuss characteristics of learning disabled, mentally retarded, and emotionally handicapped students as found in the public school system.
2. Identify the educational settings in which children who

are emotionally disturbed are most likely to be found.

3. Verify having experience in observing, as well as assisting teachers who work with exceptional children in the public school system in developing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs for these children.
4. Demonstrate a knowledge and application of Public Law 94-142 as it applies to the public education system.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of the administrative procedures to be used in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs for exceptional children.
6. Demonstrate an awareness of instructional materials, primarily commercial made, that could be used in the education and remediation of children with demonstrated learning problems.

Instructional Activities. Within Level I, the instructional activities should include both on-campus and off-campus activities. The on-campus activities will be centered around lecture and discussion-type classes, in which students will be exposed to the information concerning classification, characteristics, and learning styles of exceptional children. The off-campus activities would require students to participate as an observer and teacher-aide for a minimum of five hours a week throughout the semester in a special education classroom in the public schools.

The student during the sixteen-week semester period of time should have equal time experiences in observing public school special education classrooms that have been identified for serving

learning disabled, mentally retarded or emotionally handicapped children, plus, what has been recently termed the resource room setting. Each student will be required to participate for four weeks in each of these four different areas, for a minimum of five hours of time each week. The student will also attend lecture and discussions on campus as described above for a three-hour class period one day a week throughout the sixteen weeks of the semester.

Evaluation. Level I evaluation will consist of a postest of the students' understanding and knowledge of the classification and characteristics for the different categorical areas of special education, plus an awareness of instructional materials that could be used within each of these areas they received instruction. The criterion level of these posttest evaluations will be determined by the faculty involved in the development of course materials for Level I activities. At this level the evaluation can take the form of a pencil-paper type objective test, coupled with supervisory university and local education agency observation of the student's ability to perform prescribed tasks or recall specified types and amounts of information about teaching exceptional children.

Level II

Course Enrollment. At this level the special education major will enroll for eight hours of special education course work for eight weeks of the semester. The other eight weeks of this semester at Level II the student will enroll for eight hours of Secondary or Elementary Education in a student teaching capacity.

Objectives. The objectives for Level II are organized into five areas of instruction: curriculum, instruction, assessment,

management, and administration. At the conslusion of Level II training, students should be able to:

A. Curriculum and Instruction

1. Demonstrate knowledge of commercial made materials for remediating academic deficits in math, reading, and language.
2. Implement and evaluate these materials in teaching an identified group of exceptional children (learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, mentally retarded, or resource).
3. Plan educational programs for instructing one student for the entire practicum period to include identification of the child's problems (diagnosis), specifying educational objectives and to select or develop appropriate strategies to remediate those identified problems.
4. Assist in implementing an instructional program in one or more of the academic areas for small groups of students.
5. Assist in evaluating the effectiveness of instructional programs on the learning performance of exceptional children.

B. Assessment

1. Demonstrate competence in administrating, and interpreting formal diagnostic measure. At least 12 that are educationally related and accept for use in the public school system.

2. Apply diagnostic (formal) procedures in planning an educational program for at least one child.
3. Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of informal assessment procedures that are nondiscriminatory in nature and would result in the identification of information necessary for appropriate educational program planning.

C. Management

1. Plan, implement, and evaluate a behavior management program for at least one child.
2. Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of several different approaches to classroom or behavior management (i.e. behavior modification, contingency contracting, reflectively listening or other humanistic approaches to classroom management, etc.).
3. Demonstrate confidence in applying the above procedures in a classroom management program for an entire classroom.

D. Administration

1. Develop a recording and filing system for instructional programs that meets local education agency requirements.
2. Develop and implement a filing and retrieval system for instructional materials in the classroom.
3. Demonstrate an understanding or knowledge of federal, state, and local educational agency policies and procedures governing classroom behavior of teachers (i.e. pay, fringe benefits, tort liability, etc.).

4. Demonstrate a knowledge of Public Law 94-142.

E. Interpersonal

1. Demonstrate skills in interacting effectively with at least one parent of a child from the public school system by providing information and feedback as to that child's progress in school as well as other educationally related matters (i.e. what the parents can do at home to assist in the educational management and education of the child, etc.)
2. Demonstrate skill in interacting with other teachers on a professional level in professional meetings.
3. Interact successfully with exceptional children in the classroom.

Instructional Activities. Students at Level II will be placed in an eight week practicum setting in the public schools. Students will attend the practicum for three days a week for the length of the school day throughout the eight week practicum period of time. On the two remaining days of the week, the students will attend the classroom for one half of the school day and then attend courses either on-campus or at the practicum site given under the direction of the Special Education faculty at Brigham Young University with support coming from, if necessary, the local education agency or other identified agencies that would be appropriate. Students will receive instruction during these times in the form of seminars, lecture-disscussions or practical experience in the areas of curriculum and instruction, assessment, adminstration, classroom management, and interpersonal skills development. During the practicum

setting itself, the responsibilities of the students will be to: 1) Assist in the implementation of an ongoing existing program in one of four areas of special education preparation (mentally retarded programs, learning disabled programs, emotionally handicapped programs, and/or resource programs); 2) Work with, initially, one individual child in planning, implementing, and evaluating that child's complete educational program; 3) Work under the direction of the classroom teacher with small groups of children in implementing and evaluating academic or other school related programs; 4) Attend faculty meetings of the school in which they are completing their practicum; and 5) Interact with at least one parent during this eight week experience.

Evaluation. Evaluation of students during Level II will be completed through the collection and analysis of three types of data:

1. Pencil-paper objective type tests will be given over the course work content presented during the two instructional periods given two days a week.
2. Observations by the cooperating teacher from the practicum setting and the university supervisor in conjunction with the students' own evaluation of their performance will constitute the second set of evaluation data.
3. An independent observer will make observations of randomly selected students in Level II practicum settings. This independent observer will observe the occurence of indentified teaching competencies that should be displayed by

the student.

All the evaluation will be constructed and under the direction of the Special Education faculty at Brigham Young University.

Level III

Course Enrollment. Students at this level will be placed in one of the four practicum settings (mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotionally handicapped, and/or resource). They will complete a total of eight hours of field experience and course work instruction.

Objectives. Level III objectives will follow under the same five categories as those found in Level II. Students should be able to:

A. Assessment

1. Plan an educational assessment on each individual child in the assigned classroom to include the indentification of appropriate formal or informal test measures to be used
2. Administer and interpret educational devices that will result in the identification of assessment information for use in later educational program planning.

B. Management

1. Develop and implement a plan for the management of behaviors within the classroom both on an individual as well as total group basis.
2. Demonstrate skill in the physical arrangement of the class to facilitate learning.

3. Demonstrate an ability to provide other professionals on the education planning team information concerning the results from an individual child's diagnostic profile.

C. Interpersonal

1. Interact comfortably with parents in reflecting that parent's own son or daughter's academic or school related progress.
2. Demonstrate an ability to interact effectively with all students in the classroom.

D. Administration

1. Demonstrate an understanding of school and district policy related to the assessment and placement of children in special education programs.
2. Identify the salient features of Public Law 94-142 and their application in the development of individual programs for exceptional children.
3. Compose a filing system of records on individual children and programs found in the classroom.

E. Curriculum and Instruction

1. Demonstrate a knowledge of commercially made media and materials that are available for use in the public school classroom for teaching within each of the academic areas of math, reading, etc.
2. Utilize materials of a teacher made nature in the instruction of children with learning problems.

3. Develop instructional materials that are adapted to the individual needs of children within the classroom.
4. Demonstrate an ability to use media hardware such as filmstrips, projectors, 16mm projectors, etc.

Instructional Activities. Students will enroll for eight hours of course work. This will be completed over an eight week period of time with students spending three days a week in a public school setting. For the remaining two days, students will spend one half of those days in the classroom. The two remaining half days will be spent in a college classroom setting either at the university or at a site convenient to the students at their practicum location.

During the time the student is in the classroom teaching, the student will be responsible for the day to day operation of the classroom under the direction of the cooperating teacher. The student will act both as aid and as teacher but will have a greater responsibility for the total curriculum development and implementation than would be given to a teacher aid. The student will be expected to attend faculty meetings and interact with parents in the discussion of the parent's child's progress in the classroom.

During the two half day instructional periods, students will receive instruction in each of the five major areas of preparation: assessment, management, administration, curriculum and instruction, and interpersonal skills development. This information will be presented either in the form of lecture discussions and/or seminars that will be based upon a student's observed deficiencies in any one or more of the above areas. Specific instruction will be given

in each area based upon the observations of the university supervisor, the cooperating teacher, and the expressed need of students themselves.

Evaluation. Level III students will be evaluated in terms of three dimensions:

1. Students will be required to complete pencil-paper tests covering each of the five instructional areas (assessment, management, adminstration, curriculum and instruction, and interpersonal skills development).
2. Students will be observed by both university and school district personnel on a set of behavior and competencies to be specified by both the university and local education agencies.
3. Some students will be randomly selected and observed through an independent observer, utilizing Ticor technology, in an attempt to assess both their acquisition and utilization of identified teacher behaviors as well as an attempt to assess those behaviors that do in fact occur in the classroom.

Level IV

Course Enrollment. Students will enroll for eight hours for an eight week period of time. Students will enroll for either an eight hour block of time to complete their student teaching in the areas of resource, learning disabilities, Emotionally Handicapped, and Mental Retardation.

Objectives. Students at Level IV will be expected to demonstrated competence and ability in a practicum setting athat is primarily categorical in nature. Students will be placed within a setting that is either a special education classroom for mentally retarded children, learning disabled children, and/or within the resource program of the public school system. Within each of these settings, students will be expected to demonstrate skills as follows:

A. Assessment
   1. Demonstrate skill in adminstrating tests appropriate to a specific categorical area.
   2. Adminster and interpret results from tests given to children representing a categorical area.

B. Management
   1. Demonstrate skill in the management of children who have been placed within a specific categorical area in special education.
   2. To manage environments for children placed within a specified categorical area.

C. Interpersonal
   1. Relate appropriately with parents and/or other professionals who deal specifically with a specific categorical area of special education.
   2. Interact appropriately with non-professional and others in terms of reporting and interpreting information concerning children placed withing a categorical area in special education.

D. Administration

1. Demonstrate an understanding of policies and procedures as they relate to administering programs for a specified categorical area in special education.
2. Develop and implement a filing system that is appropriate to a categorical area of special education.

E. Curriculum and Instruction

1. Demonstrate understanding and knowledge concerning instructional programs that have been designed for use with a categorical area of special education.
2. Implement and evaluate instructional programs that have been designed for use with a categorical area of special education.
3. Design appropriate or adapt existing instructional programs for specified categorical areas of special education.

Instructional Activities. Students at Level IV will have a greater responsibility for the day to day operation of the classroom. At this level students should have almost total control and responsibility for the day to day operation of the public school classroom. Students will be responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating instructional programs. This is to be accomplished under the direction of university and local education agency personnel. Students will attend to the classroom for over an eight week period of time, five days a week. Two three hour instructional periods will receive instruction in the form of lectures, seminars, or practical experience in each of the five instructional areas

mentioned above (assessment, management, etc.).

Evaluation. Evaluation of students at Level IV will be similar to that conducted in Levels II and III, with three areas of evaluation being implemented.